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Mr Paul Hodgkinson
Interim Executive Headteacher
Lever Park School
Stocks Park Drive
Horwich
Bolton
Lancashire
BL6 6DE

Dear Mr Hodgkinson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lever Park School

Following my visit to your school on 10 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

This visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher and two senior leaders, two members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. The inspector had discussions with the headteacher of a local teaching school and with Lever Park's School Improvement Partner. The inspector also visited lessons in all year groups. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board. The first meeting of the IEB took place on 3 March 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The interim executive headteacher and senior leaders have a clear understanding of why the school requires special measures and have taken immediate action to improve the quality of education at Lever Park. The local authority has acted quickly and decisively to strengthen the quality of leadership and management and secure the support needed to bring about rapid and sustained improvement.

The interim executive headteacher is providing a strong drive for improvement. He has quickly gained the confidence and trust of his colleagues and the wider school community. New systems to support planning, teaching and assessment have been implemented successfully, alongside new systems for monitoring students' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The positive impact of these changes on students' engagement and learning was already evident in the visits to lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the marking of books clearly identified what each student needed to do next. Students were given 'fix-it' time in the lesson to correct their mistakes and, if they needed more help, additional specialist teaching sessions were quickly provided.

Immediate action has been taken to address the weaknesses in safeguarding identified in the section 5 inspection. With external support, senior leaders have reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. New, more rigorous, recording systems have been implemented and two senior leaders have completed the local authority's training for designated teachers for safeguarding.

The school's improvement plan has a sharp focus on the actions needed to improve the quality of education at Lever Park. It provides a good starting point for making the much-needed changes. The plan includes measurable step-by-step targets for improvement and clearly identifies how progress towards these targets will be monitored and reviewed. The school has not yet commissioned an external review of the use of the pupil premium. This should be completed before the next section 8 monitoring inspection.

Members of the newly formed IEB have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are bringing a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience to their work. The IEB is clear about its role and individual members understand the importance of holding the school's leaders more robustly to account.

Partnerships with local secondary schools and pupil referral units are strong. This is enhancing the school's capacity for improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the IEB and the Director of Children's Services for Bolton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nick Whittaker

Associate Inspector

'Appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006'